IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 29-32 and 34-36 without prejudice or disclaimer.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-5 (cancelled)

Claim 6 (previously presented)   A method for accelerating sales transactions of customers in a retail store, comprising the acts of:

reading a customer payment card number at a customer checkout accelerator;

determining a preapproval amount for the sales transaction;

displaying the preapproval sales transaction amount to the customer on the customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;

transmitting the preapproval amount to an external card services system for approval;

storing the approval amount in a preapproval cache at a point of sales terminal for use in completing the sales transaction;

determining if the payment card is one or more of a credit card, a debit card, a customer loyalty card, an electronic/Internet wallet, or an electronic gift certificate;

wherein if the payment card is a customer loyalty card, determining a preapproval amount that is based on an actual purchase history for the customer.

Claim 7 (previously presented)   A method for accelerating sales transactions of customers in a retail store, comprising the acts of:

reading a customer payment card number at a customer checkout accelerator;

determining a preapproval amount for the sales transaction;

displaying the preapproval sales transaction amount to the customer on the customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;

transmitting the preapproval amount to an external card services system for approval;

storing the approval amount in a preapproval cache at a point of sales terminal for use in completing the sales transaction;

determining if the payment card is one or more of a credit card, a debit card, a customer loyalty card, an electronic/Internet wallet, or an electronic gift certificate;

wherein if the payment card is a credit or debit card, determining a preapproval amount that is based on an average customer purchase amount for credit and debit transactions on a store wide basis

Claim 8 (cancelled)

Claim 9 (previously presented) A method for accelerating sales transactions of customers in a retail store, comprising the acts of:

reading a customer payment card number at a customer checkout accelerator;

determining a preapproval amount for the sales transaction;

displaying the preapproval sales transaction amount to the customer on the customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;

transmitting the preapproval amount to an external card services system for approval;

storing the approval amount in a preapproval cache at a point of sales terminal for use in completing the sales transaction;

scanning the customer payment card at a point of sales terminal;

determining if there is an entry for the customer in the preapproval cache; and

resuming the sales transaction at the point of sale terminal.

Claim 10 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 9 wherein the act of resuming the sales transaction comprises the acts of:

comparing the actual sales transaction amount with the preapproval amount;

updating a preapproval database with the actual sales transaction amount; and

releasing the difference between the preapproval amount and the actual sales transaction amount in the preapproval database.

Claim 11 (cancelled)

Claim 12 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 9 wherein if there is no entry for the customer in the preapproval cache, retrieving the preapproval amount from a preapproval database on a store controller file server.

Claim 13 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 10 wherein the act of resuming the sales transaction includes the acts of:

scanning the items selected by the customer for purchase during the sales transaction;

determining a subtotal purchase amount after each item is scanned;

determining if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval amount; and

dynamically requesting an additional amount for approval during the sales transaction, if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval amount.

Claim 14 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 13 further comprising the acts of:

transmitting an additional preapproval amount from the external card services system;

updating the preapproval cache with the additional preapproval amount if approved; and

notifying the operator of the point of sale terminal if the additional preapproval amount is denied.

Claims 15-45 (cancelled)